Useful links and places:

-Catholic Worker international websites:
www.catholicworker.com
www.catholicworker.org
www.lacatholicworker.org
www.ca.geocities.com/vancouvercatholicworker

-Radical/Progressive Christianity
www.jesusradicals.org
www.nonviolentjesus.blogspot.com
http://www.geezmagazine.org
www.catholicanarchy.org
www.free-episcopal.org
www.disseminary.org
www.tierra-nueva.org
www.treebythewater.org/

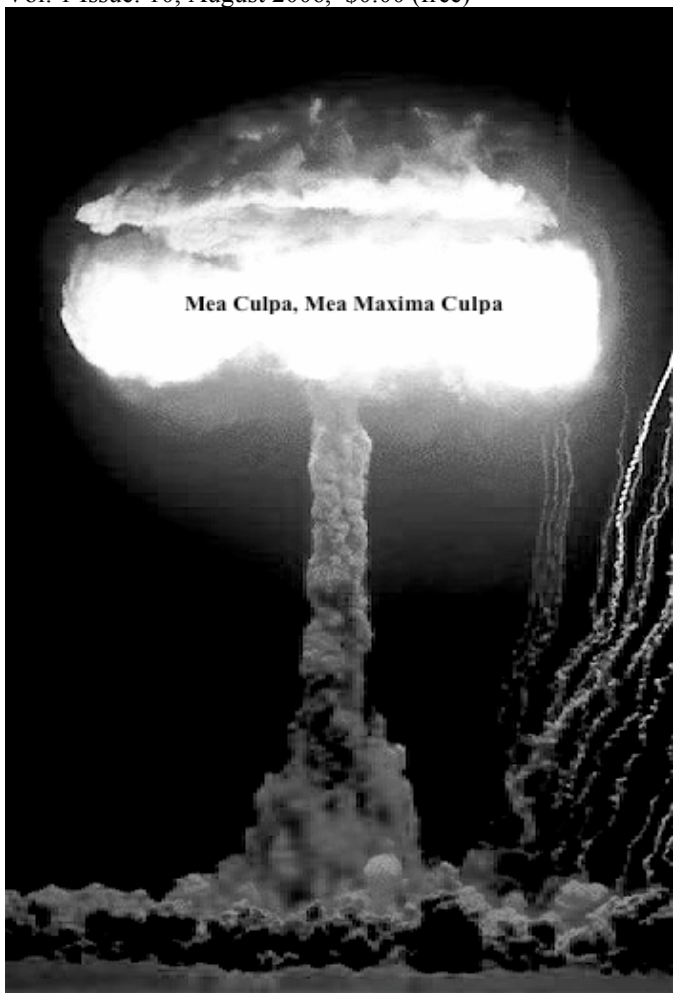
-Anti-War
www.stopwar.ca
www.ivaw.net
www.resisters.ca
www.wri-irg.org

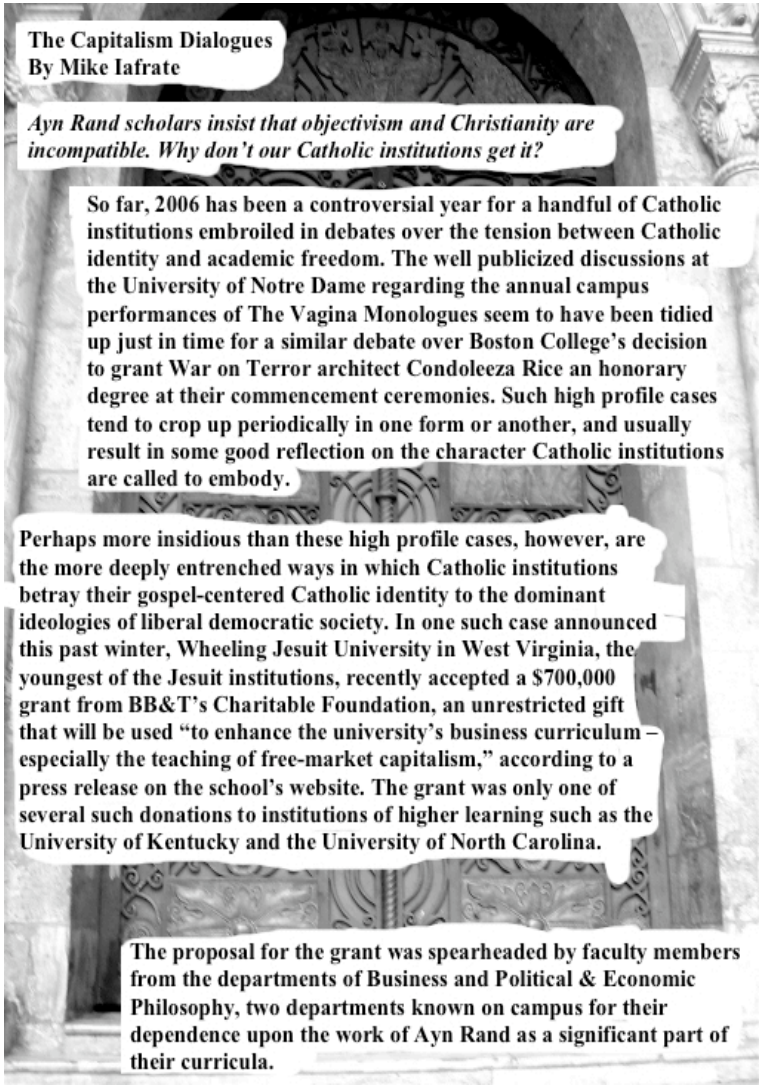
-Other Activism
www.foodnotbombs.net
www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook
www.iww.org
www.deathpenalty.org
www.lovarchy.org
www.eugenevdebs.com
www.freegan.info/?page=home
www.justicia4migrantworkers.org

-Cool Places:
www.gnn.tv
www.spartacusbooks.org
http://www.bcm-net.org/
www.southcentralfarmers.com
www.commongroundrelief.org
www.freewebs.com/stormnyc/index.htm
www.jonahhouse.org

The Christian Radical.

Vol. 1 Issue: 10, August 2006, $0.00 (free)





The Capitalism Dialogues

By Mike Iafrate

Ayn Rand scholars insist that objectivism and Christianity are incompatible. Why don't our Catholic institutions get it?

So far, 2006 has been a controversial year for a handful of Catholic institutions embroiled in debates over the tension between Catholic identity and academic freedom. The well publicized discussions at the University of Notre Dame regarding the annual campus performances of The Vagina Monologues seem to have been tidied up just in time for a similar debate over Boston College's decision to grant War on Terror architect Condoleeza Rice an honorary degree at their commencement ceremonies. Such high profile cases tend to crop up periodically in one form or another, and usually result in some good reflection on the character Catholic institutions are called to embody.

Perhaps more insidious than these high profile cases, however, are the more deeply entrenched ways in which Catholic institutions betray their gospel-centered Catholic identity to the dominant ideologies of liberal democratic society. In one such case announced this past winter, Wheeling Jesuit University in West Virginia, the youngest of the Jesuit institutions, recently accepted a $700,000 grant from BB&T's Charitable Foundation, an unrestricted gift that will be used "to enhance the university's business curriculum – especially the teaching of free-market capitalism," according to a press release on the school's website. The grant was only one of several such donations to institutions of higher learning such as the University of Kentucky and the University of North Carolina.

The proposal for the grant was spearheaded by faculty members from the departments of Business and Political & Economic Philosophy, two departments known on campus for their dependence upon the work of Ayn Rand as a significant part of their curricula.

Business professor Ed Younkins, for example, is a well-known Ayn Rand scholar and has been praised in the university's P.R. for his creative use of Rand's novels in the classroom. And as one might expect coming from this particular group of capitalists at Wheeling Jesuit, the grant's fine print reveals that this is not a financial gift with no ideological strings attached. Indeed, as a letter from John Allison of BB&T addressed to the business department states, the explicit purpose of the grant is the promotion of the philosophy of Ayn Rand (which she called "objectivism") within the business curriculum through added courses, the founding of an Ayn Rand section of the school's library, increased funding for objectivist speakers, and other such measures.

Rand's philosophy – an extreme form of philosophical liberalism that stresses individualism, the deification of reason, the "common sense" of the profit motive, and the moral pursuit of self-interest, all outside of the context of any notion of a divinely revealed telos for humanity – is thoroughly anti-Christian.

Rand herself was vehemently anti-religion, having particular disgust toward Christianity, calling faith the "worst curse of mankind" (sic) and stating that "the only moral commandment is: Thou shalt think… The moral is the rational, and reason accepts no commandments."

This radical atheism is not only a requirement of Rand's objectivism, but is part of the very fabric of capitalism as argued by Andrew Bernstein, Leonard Peikoff and other contemporary Randian writers who insist upon the incompatibility of the values of capitalism and the values of Christianity. Bernstein, in fact, strongly criticizes the likes of Michael Novak who make a living trying to force together the competing worldviews of Catholicism and capitalism.

The problem of opposing value systems is at the heart of debates about Catholic identity, and as part of the Monologues debates at Notre Dame, president Fr. John Jenkins delivered a compelling speech which emphasized an important distinction between open discussion of controversial topics or ideologies and institutional sponsorship of activities that conflict with the values and virtues of Catholicism.

If "positions that are clearly at odds with the deep values of Catholicism… are sponsored by the university, or by one of its units or recognized organizations, their occurrence would suggest that the university sponsors not merely open discussions of controversial topics, but endorses or at least considers compatible with its values the particular positions that are being advanced." Certain activities, as such, may be judged inappropriate on a Catholic campus in light of the school's ecclesial commitments.

Whether or not the principles Jenkins expressed were appropriately applied to The Vagina Monologues case is certainly up for debate. (Regardless, it seems the show will go on.) But the core insight and the distinction between discussion and promotion of controversial ideologies is an important and accurate one. Of course, the insight that Jenkins articulated is frequently applied to the area of sexual morality, but it is a crucial distinction that should be applied to other areas as well. Indeed, students on many Catholic (and mostly Jesuit) campuses have led successful campaigns against their schools' use of outsourced labor such as Sodexho-Marriott's food services and cooperation with companies such as Nike that profit from sweatshop labor. Each spring, based on this very question of institutional sponsorship, "liberals" and "conservatives" like battle it out over the appropriateness of possible commencement speakers. But can we, should we, extend Jenkins' insights into the difficult area of examining the very curriculum at Catholic institutions and the sources our universities solicit in order to fund those curricula?

Some of the faculty at Wheeling Jesuit think so. Despite praise in local media and in the student newspaper, many faculty – especially within the theology department – have raised concerns throughout the whole process and vow to make sure the grant is used to provide balanced dialogue on capitalism that takes into full account the social teachings of the Catholic Church. The Gospel, the Church's teaching on economics, and the school's mission statement should hold priority over neo-liberal economic philosophy, especially as articulated by Ayn Rand and her successors, they say.

Reportedly, the school's president Joseph Hacala, SJ, even quoted from the U.S. Bishops' statements on the economy in his grant acceptance speech, expressing thanks, but hinting that the Church's corpus of social teachings will not be completely set aside in favor of Atlas Shrugged and The Fountainhead. Indeed, a professor of moral theology expressed his hope that "much good may come of this, namely awakening the world and the business department to the contradictions between their 'Randian' biases and the nature of our school."

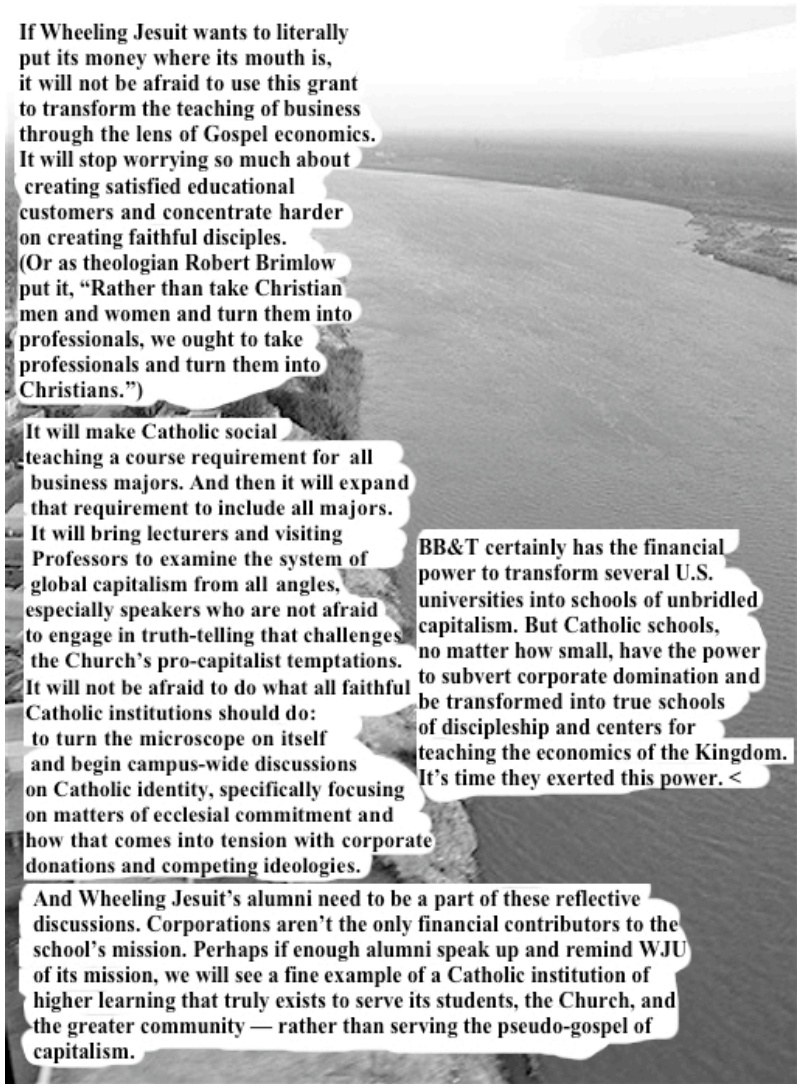
But one wonders if the acceptance of such a gift signals a compromise with and an indebtedness to corporate interests — a problem Wheeling Jesuit and most Catholic institutions of higher learning suffer from in one way or another. One also wonders why such a gift is even needed in the first place if the intent is to truly examine capitalism from a balanced perspective. Reportedly, the theology faculty at Wheeling Jesuit have been attempting to convince the business department that it should include a course on Catholic social teaching as a graduation requirement with no luck. What makes social justice minded folks at the university think that suddenly those in charge of disbursing this $700,000 will be willing to include perspectives that question capitalism from a gospel perspective, especially when the grant's stated purpose is to teach — and to promote — Rand's objectivist philosophy? Indeed, for all of president Hacala's references to the U.S. bishops' teaching on the economy, when asked repeatedly about the compromising position in which Wheeling Jesuit has placed itself by accepting this grant, he had no comment.

Wheeling Jesuit, like many other Catholic universities, has a potentially deep missional crisis on its hands, a crisis best expressed by Catholic theologian William Cavanaugh: "Many Catholic universities today like to talk about 'values' without saying which ones." Historically, Wheeling Jesuit has a mission geared toward forming persons who "will champion the Jesuit values of faith, peace and justice," persons who "will use their God-give talents, not solely for personal fulfillment but as men and women in service to others."

That mission looks great on the glossy paper of recruiting brochures, but if that mission fails to produce what it proclaims, if Wheeling Jesuit is predominantly pumping out students who are just like everybody else — good, capitalistic Americans — then the school is seriously failing to be what a Catholic institution of higher learning is called to be.

Part of this missional crisis so many of our Catholic colleges and universities are facing has to do not so much with the temptation to promote ideologies that plainly contradict the worldview of Christianity, but with the temptation to provide a "marketable" education to its students. The faculty and administration is not, I don't think, setting out to transform itself into Wheeling Objectivist University. It is simply trying its hardest to compete in the educational market. During my time there as a campus minister, I witnessed a number of forums in which administrators would interact with students in order to show their concern and approachability. On more than one occasion, I heard administrators speak of the school as a business and of the students as customers. This way of speaking of the Catholic university experience seemed right on target with most of the students who heard it. But this story is not unique to Wheeling Jesuit. This consumerist mindset of Catholic education, divorced from any ecclesial commitments in an effort to "compete," has permeated the majority of our institutions, leaving the prophetic world-transforming work of the Catholic university un-embraced.

In this desire to be marketable, Wheeling Jesuit has chosen, in a very specific way, to promote Randian capitalism in one of its most active departments, rather than merely teaching it as one ideological perspective among many. If anything, a Jesuit, Catholic institution in the United States should teach a variety of worldviews, but should remain very clear as to which one it has been given a mission to "promote": the Gospel, including its radical economics as articulated in Catholic social teaching. Catholic social teaching, dubbed Catholicism's "best kept secret," should never be a secret on a Jesuit, Catholic college campus.



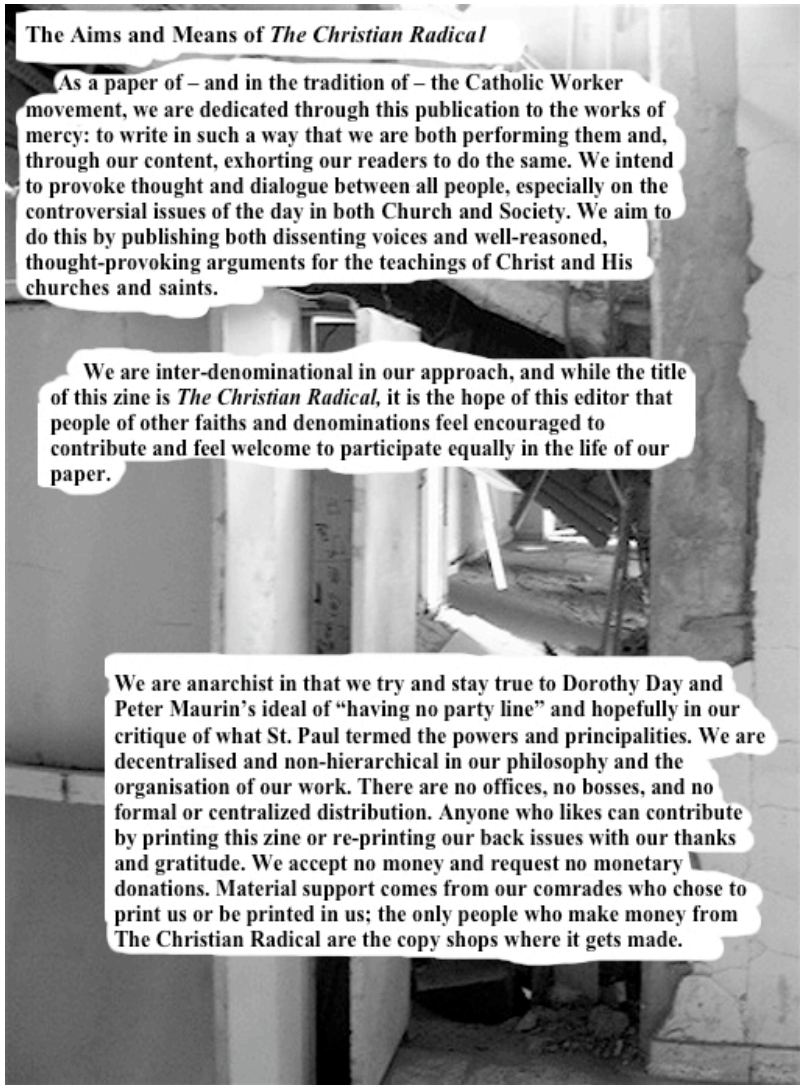


So this is the tenth issue of our zine. Originally when this project was started I intended it to be a way for me to become more engaged in the life of the Vancouver Catholic Worker community at a time when the house was too full to take new staff or guests. This paper has since expanded in its scope. It is firstly the paper of the Vancouver Worker but it is also becoming somewhat more international, with regular contributors in places like Palestine/Israel, Texas, and Australia--to name a few.

It was in response to the first piece by Steven Woods titled "I'll Not Go Quietly" that we received out first really critical response from a reader. Frank Atwood, a death row inmate in Arizona wrote "In some ways I'd prefer a more Christian focused format, more like the Ro. 13 Jesus Radical articles rather than rants on establishment."

Since this was the first really critical reader response we'd ever received it was worth examining and it is why Karl and I thought it would be a good time to create a manifesto. To look back over what we've done so far and take from those first months and bring forward the lessons we continue to learn in a re-dedicated and more focused form so that we can continue do this work as best we can and so you reading this might have a better understanding of what--with God's help--we are trying to accomplish.

-Chris Rooney

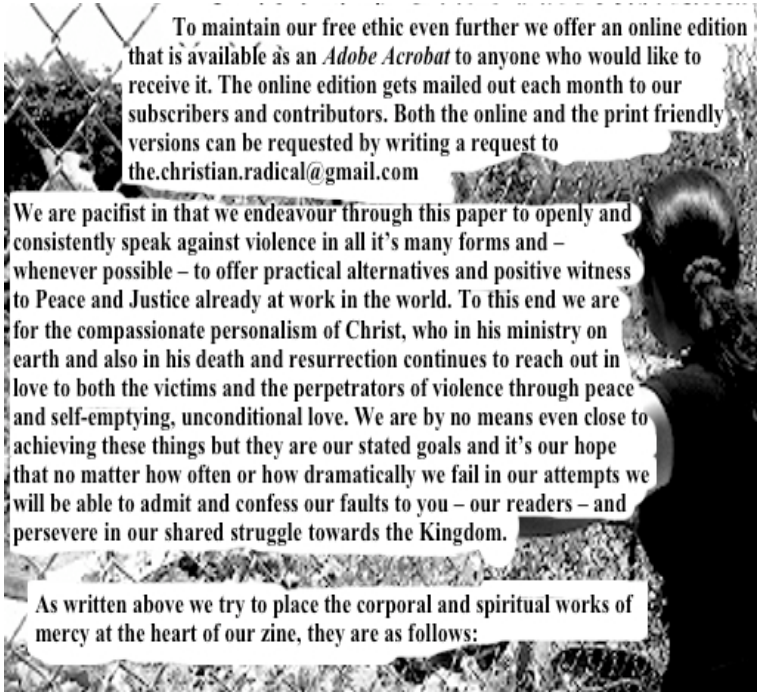


The Aims and Means of *The Christian Radical*

As a paper of – and in the tradition of – the Catholic Worker movement, we are dedicated through this publication to the works of mercy: to write in such a way that we are both performing them and, through our content, exhorting our readers to do the same. We intend to provoke thought and dialogue between all people, especially on the controversial issues of the day in both Church and Society. We aim to do this by publishing both dissenting voices and well-reasoned, thought-provoking arguments for the teachings of Christ and His churches and saints.

We are inter-denominational in our approach, and while the title of this zine is *The Christian Radical,* it is the hope of this editor that people of other faiths and denominations feel encouraged to contribute and feel welcome to participate equally in the life of our paper.

We are anarchist in that we try and stay true to Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin's ideal of "having no party line" and hopefully in our critique of what St. Paul termed the powers and principalities. We are decentralised and non-hierarchical in our philosophy and the organisation of our work. There are no offices, no bosses, and no formal or centralized distribution. Anyone who likes can contribute by printing this zine or re-printing our back issues with our thanks and gratitude. We accept no money and request no monetary donations. Material support comes from our comrades who chose to print us or be printed in us; the only people who make money from The Christian Radical are the copy shops where it gets made.

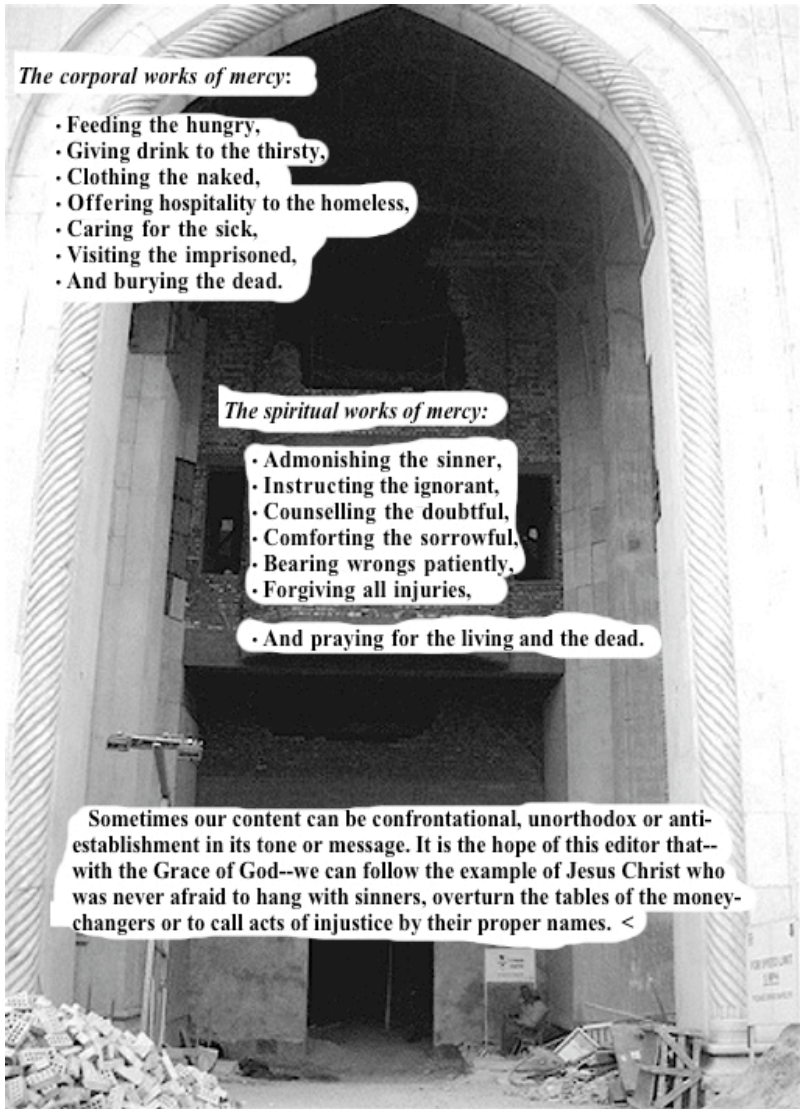


To maintain our free ethic even further we offer an online edition that is available as an *Adobe Acrobat* to anyone who would like to receive it. The online edition gets mailed out each month to our subscribers and contributors. Both the online and the print friendly versions can be requested by writing a request to the.christian.radical@gmail.com

We are pacifist in that we endeavour through this paper to openly and consistently speak against violence in all it's many forms and – whenever possible – to offer practical alternatives and positive witness to Peace and Justice already at work in the world. To this end we are for the compassionate personalism of Christ, who in his ministry on earth and also in his death and resurrection continues to reach out in love to both the victims and the perpetrators of violence through peace and self-emptying, unconditional love. We are by no means even close to achieving these things but they are our stated goals and it's our hope that no matter how often or how dramatically we fail in our attempts we will be able to admit and confess our faults to you – our readers – and persevere in our shared struggle towards the Kingdom.

As written above we try to place the corporal and spiritual works of mercy at the heart of our zine, they are as follows:





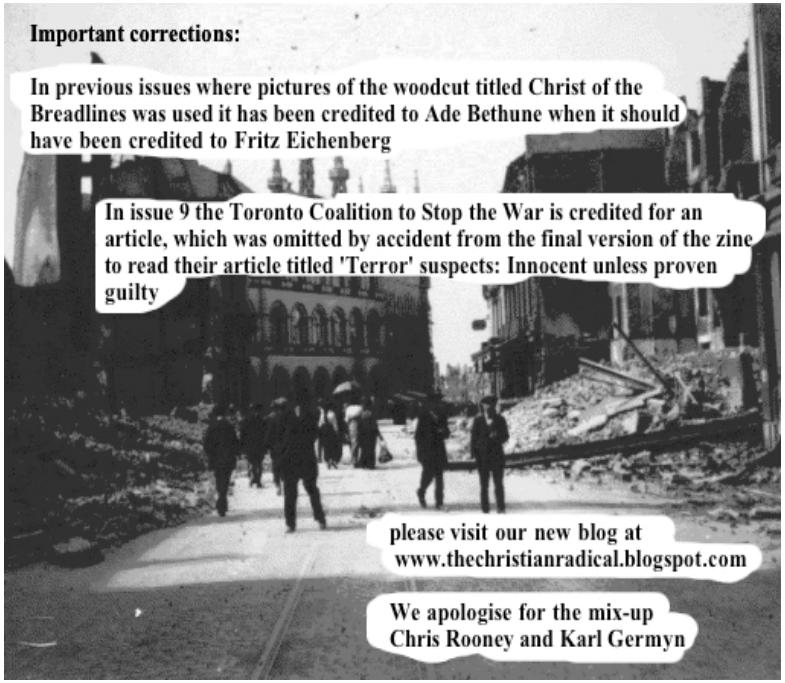
The corporal works of mercy:

- Feeding the hungry,
- Giving drink to the thirsty,
- Clothing the naked,
- Offering hospitality to the homeless,
- Caring for the sick,
- Visiting the imprisoned,
- And burying the dead.

The spiritual works of mercy:

- Admonishing the sinner,
- Instructing the ignorant,
- Counselling the doubtful,
- Comforting the sorrowful,
- Bearing wrongs patiently,
- Forgiving all injuries,
- And praying for the living and the dead.

Sometimes our content can be confrontational, unorthodox or anti-establishment in its tone or message. It is the hope of this editor that--with the Grace of God--we can follow the example of Jesus Christ who was never afraid to hang with sinners, overturn the tables of the money-changers or to call acts of injustice by their proper names. <





DEMOCRACY
IS BEST TAUGHT
BY EXAMPLE,
NOT BY WAR.

What A New Christianity Might Look Like
By Mike Friesen

Drawing on Marcus Borg's contribution to The Changing Face of God, I would like to put forward the sort of Christianity I would like to see take-off in the 21st Century. In brief:

1. **A mission-oriented Christianity as opposed to a mode-oriented Christianity.**

Fundamentalism demands that all major doctrines (the virgin birth, the inerrancy of scripture, the resurrection of Christ) be taken literally. There is no room to budge. This is what I would call a mode-oriented Christianity. It is more concerned with the literalness of a doctrine than it is with its implications. A mission-oriented Christianity would ask, "You believe in X, Y, and Z. So what?" Believing in a literal virgin birth is fine, but what does that entail in your day to day life? Whereas a mode-oriented Christianity might spend hours attempting to prove how a woman could give birth without breaking her hymen, a mission-oriented Christianity would compare the birth of Caesar to the birth of Christ and then ask, "Who do you worship? Caesar or Christ?"

2. **An experience-based Christianity as opposed to a creedal Christianity.**

Creeds attempt to define away the essentials of one's beliefs. Since definition demands limiting, creeds inevitably have the effect of boxing in G-d. An experienced-based Christianity would acknowledge that G-d is too big for creeds. No creed - whether Jewish, Christian, Muslim, or Sikh - can capture the essence of G-d. That being said, they may help point towards the living G-d who is beyond the creeds. This is a helpful mentality in that it facilitates interfaith dialogue - something of urgent importance in a world still dealing with religious strife, not least in countries like Iraq. So creeds would not be jettisoned, but they would be put in their proper place.

No longer would believers exist to propagate creeds, but creeds would exist to facilitate the spiritual life of the believer. What's more, the private experience of the believer would not be subjected to a theological litmus test assuming it resulted in loving, compassionate behaviour.

3. **A questioning Christianity as opposed to a closed Christianity.**

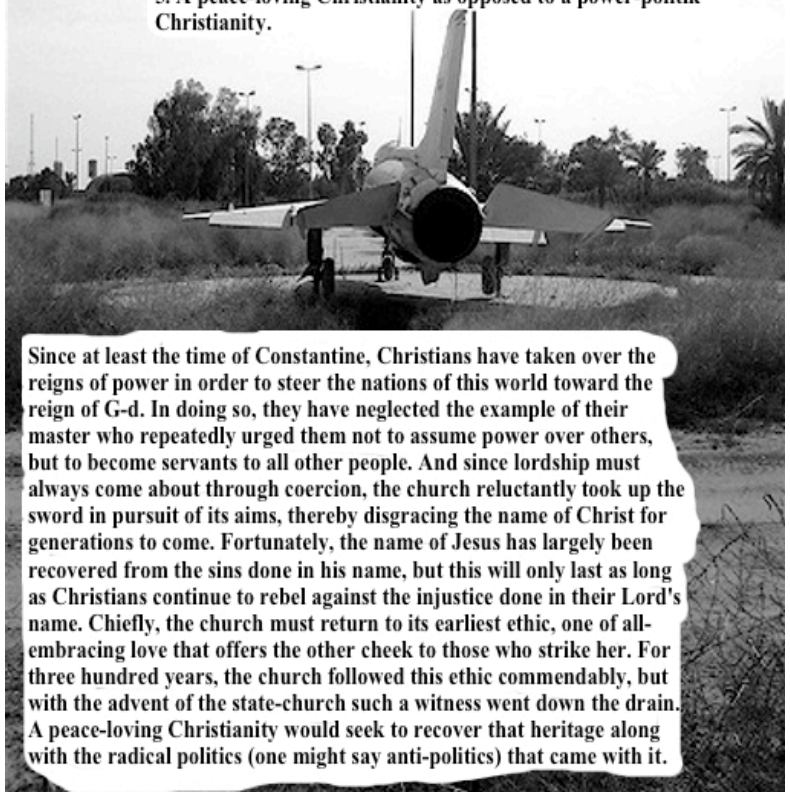
One of the reasons both Roman Catholicism and Judaism have such rich traditions is they have both encouraged a continual re-examination of beliefs and prejudices. While Roman Catholicism may have lagged behind in the Middle Ages, it is nevertheless true that since Vatican II lay and ordained theologians have attempted to make sense of the historic faith in light of new insights into human nature (if such a thing exists), ethnicity, gender, and the world around us. Likewise, Judaism has encouraged its followers to question even the existence of G-d. Nothing is off limits for Jewish inquiry. As a result, their faith is much richer since it rests not upon fear (believe this or perish in the fires of hell) but upon legitimate inquiry (I have come to this conclusion through my own reasoning as well as my personal experience). A questioning Christianity would welcome dissent, questioning, and diversity in contrast to the closed model of Christianity which presumes to have all the answers (however much it may deny it) and therefore discourages innovation and theological creativity.

4**. An egalitarian Christianity as opposed to a hierarchal Christianity.**

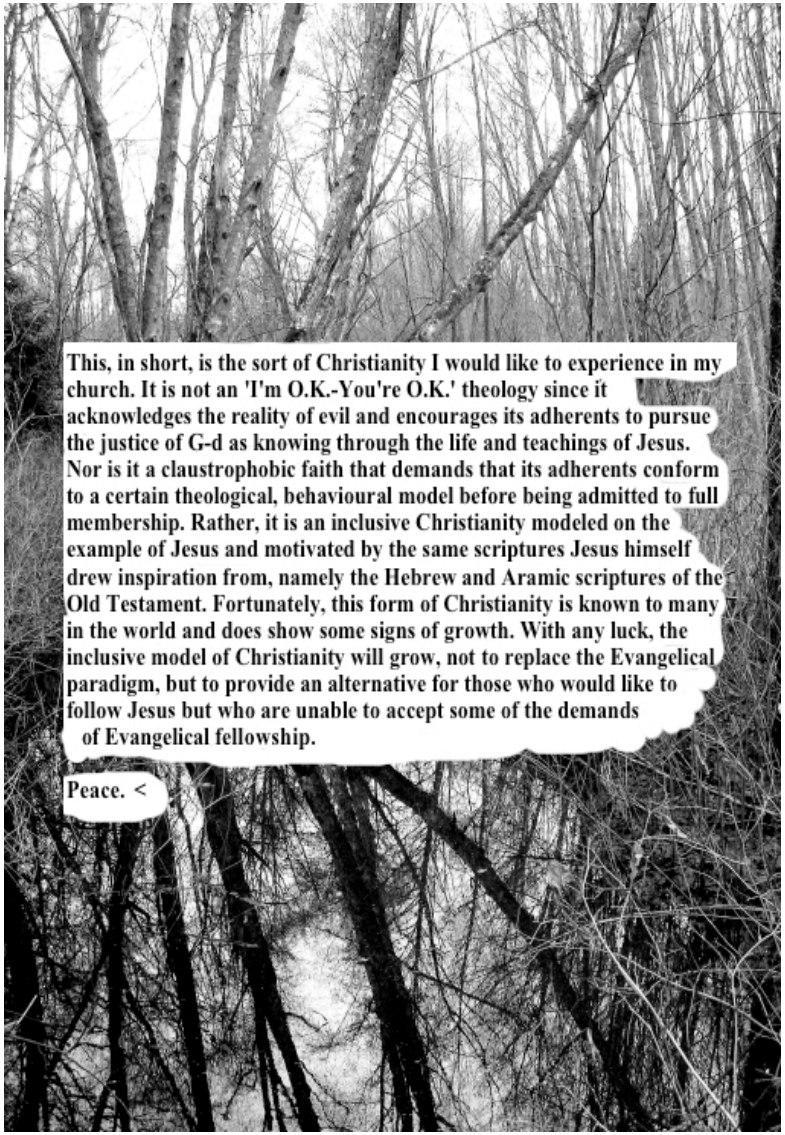
The Jesus movement began as an inclusive program of Jewish renewal. It welcomed women, Samaritans, servants, Roman soldiers, and tax-collectors to the same table. Dominic Crossan, in his work Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography, observes that Jesus' pattern of free healings and table fellowship combined with the acceptance of hospitality to create an egalitarian framework for his ministry. Instead of being tied to a particular place, whereby he might become the local wonder work, he travelled from place offering healings and table

fellowship in exchange for a warm welcome and hospitality. In this way, Jesus rebelled against the dominant brokerage model of his society, which excluded most of the population from access to wealth, authority, and G-d. The reign of G-d as known through Jesus' ministry, by contrast, broke down all barriers, making G-d available to all, regardless of ethnicity, gender, or tribal affiliation. An egalitarian Christianity would seek to emulate Jesus' ministry by eschewing sexism, hierarchy, and clericalism in the church, encouraging instead a lay-led, lay-focused Christianity that ministered to the needs of the parishoners rather than to the needs of a religious bureaucracy.

5. A peace-loving Christianity as opposed to a power-politik Christianity.



Since at least the time of Constantine, Christians have taken over the reigns of power in order to steer the nations of this world toward the reign of G-d. In doing so, they have neglected the example of their master who repeatedly urged them not to assume power over others, but to become servants to all other people. And since lordship must always come about through coercion, the church reluctantly took up the sword in pursuit of its aims, thereby disgracing the name of Christ for generations to come. Fortunately, the name of Jesus has largely been recovered from the sins done in his name, but this will only last as long as Christians continue to rebel against the injustice done in their Lord's name. Chiefly, the church must return to its earliest ethic, one of all-embracing love that offers the other cheek to those who strike her. For three hundred years, the church followed this ethic commendably, but with the advent of the state-church such a witness went down the drain. A peace-loving Christianity would seek to recover that heritage along with the radical politics (one might say anti-politics) that came with it.



I'll Not Go Quietly

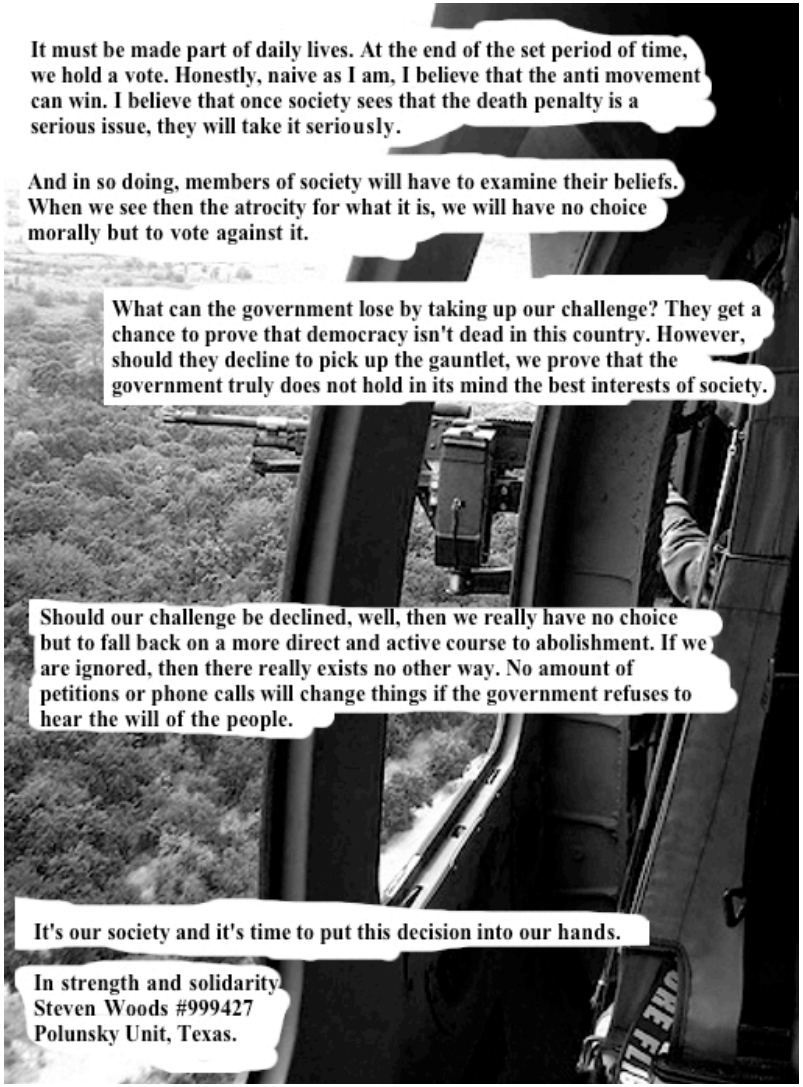
By Steven Woods

I've been sitting here thinking, wondering just how many people in the United States are actually for or against the death penalty. Sure, we have our polls, but who is polled, and what do they actually show? I have it in my mind that most Americans have very little real knowledge about the process and appliance of capital punishment. I mean, it's so highly evident in everything I read and hear about it nowadays. I see many people educated, and then once they see what the ultimate penalty actually entails (the whole process from arrest to death) they either come off the fence and go against it or go completely from supporting the penalty to opposing it vehemently.

And then, I think "what's the point? Now that you've come over, what can you do?" I think that educating the people is great, but I feel it needs to be done on a wider spectrum with a firm goal, purpose, and attainable solution in mind. I have a couple: I've previously discussed one in a few of these missives, and so here I'll speak on another one more people might find as a more desirable solution. After some thought, I've come up with something that, if it doesn't take, will prove just how undemocratic our government really is.

Naturally being an anarchist, I'm prone to speak against the democratic process. But, my comrades, that is the system we have in place; and so we should use it as much to our advantage as possible (while thinking of/working to "change" it, of course-never forget, as long as the establishment is in place, we remain slaves). I have a simple proposition: let us vote on capital punishment. I propose (and all of you who so love petitions will love this) we petition the government for the ability to decide this issue for ourselves. After all, it is we – society as a whole – who are affected.

In this petition, I suggest that we ask that executions be televised during a period of time in which both pro- and anti-death penalty groups can campaign. The display of executions allows society to see the end result of "justice" and is the only fair way for the state to act.


It must be made part of daily lives. At the end of the set period of time, we hold a vote. Honestly, naive as I am, I believe that the anti movement can win. I believe that once society sees that the death penalty is a serious issue, they will take it seriously.
And in so doing, members of society will have to examine their beliefs. When we see then the atrocity for what it is, we will have no choice morally but to vote against it.
What can the government lose by taking up our challenge? They get a chance to prove that democracy isn't dead in this country. However, should they decline to pick up the gauntlet, we prove that the government truly does not hold in its mind the best interests of society.
Should our challenge be declined, well, then we really have no choice but to fall back on a more direct and active course to abolishment. If we are ignored, then there really exists no other way. No amount of petitions or phone calls will change things if the government refuses to hear the will of the people.
It's our society and it's time to put this decision into our hands.
In strength and solidarity
Steven Woods #999427
Polunsky Unit, Texas.


A Creation Lament
(I Kings 19 updated)
A modern man at the mountain of God…
Man sent a nuclear bomb
But God was not in the nuke.
Then Man sent napalm
But God was not in the fire that burns flesh.
Then Man sent cruise missiles
But God was not in the missiles.
Finally…
God spoke in a gentle whisper
For Peace
But Man acted as though deaf,
Blind, and stiff necked
Sayonara!
(For Hiroshima and Nagasaki)
R.I.P.

On Conflict
By Robert Quinn

For the past six years, I have been studying the social sciences. In this time, I have been exposed to numerous theories purporting to explain why people do the things they do, including structural theories, instrumental theories, biological and psychological theories, and radical theories.

Of these, my heart has always resonated with the conflict theories. As a group, conflict theories are extremely diverse.

Most trace their roots back to Marx's view of a world divided by class, and have in common a view of the world as composed of groups locked in competition for resources and dominance.

Although I have loved the power of these theories to address issues like racism, classism, sexism, gender-oppression, and the various other "ism"s, I am beginning to think that these theories are doomed. I believe this for the following reasons:

1) Conflict theories constitute an essential and divisive discourse.

The theories posit a world composed of separate and distinct social groups who exist in opposition. Central to this world-view is the notion of irreconcilable difference and an "us versus them" mentality.

The theories suggest that groups are, and must be, in a perpetual war for resources and power.

Consequentially, the theories gloss over the varied positions that exist within any social group. This contributes to an essentialized understanding of the Other, one in which the Other is seen as hegemonic and necessarily opposed to the Self.

Such an understanding can be well seen in various inter-group perceptions, such as perceptions of the white-male as oppressive, heterosexist and selfish, or the counter-perception of the feminist male as queer, physically and intellectually stunted, and misguided.

Flowing directly from the essentializing view of the conflict perspective is the great divisiveness these theories perpetuate. As a paradigm, these theories encourage individuals to identify with a group and define their identity both within that group and in opposition to other groups. In ceasing to see the Other as an individual possessing all the quirks and subtleties, and contradictions, of a human being, and in coming to see the Other as an extension of a hegemonic power fundamentally opposed to one's Self and social identity, individuals possessed of a conflict-based world view easily fall into polemic politics and cease meaningful discourse with Othered peoples, coming instead to advance solely their own position while simultaneously ignoring as ignorant, dangerous or foolish the positions of others. Thus the conflict paradigm contributes to a divisive and altogether unhealthy inter-group discourse.

2) Conflict theories perpetuate and recreate Western individualistic and capitalistic power relationships and competition in identity formation.

By expounding the notions of inter-group conflict as both normal and inevitable, and defining the outcome of that conflict as dominance, and by presenting that dominance as desirable, conflict theories run the risk of reinforcing and even recreating the power-dynamics they so vehemently oppose and vilify.

While not all conflict theories posit conflict as a healthy or good thing, many do indeed suggest that it is normal and, indeed, inevitable for groups to be in conflict given the diverse perspectives they hold and the limited resources available to realize those perspectives.

As outlined above, the conflict-based perspective encourages the formation of group based identity and the oppositional location of that identity within the social framework. In other words, conflict theories encourage adherents to think in terms of "us" versus "them", and to see "us" as necessarily opposed to "them", and to locate in "them" the principal causes of the majority of "our" problems. In this way, the individualistic, selfish and competitive norms of capitalism are re-normalized and valued in what is thought to be an anticapitalist paradigm, and capitalist class-relationships and power-dominance are reinforced as both existing and, in a strange way, good.

I say this because groups possessed of the conflict-based paradigm often see it as both right and desirable to destroy the capitalist groups and to marginalize capitalist perspective and praxis, and in this way the conflict-based groups simply recreate a system of dominance and oppression wherein their world-view is lionized and the capitalist view is demonized, and actions of gross inhumanity and dominance are justifiable as "advancing our interests".

3) Conflict-based theories over-simplify oppression and power.

The vast majority of conflict-based theories see oppression as a top-down phenomenon. In this view, oppression exists because dominant groups exert control and exercise power to keep that dominance. Subordinate groups are exploited by dominant ones, and individuals or groups who attempt to disrupt the existing power-dominance complex are subject to discipline.

While I do not disagree with this view of dominance, I feel it is overly-simplistic, and fails to take into account the myriad forms of power existing both between and, importantly, within groups, and I feel that this top-down model of oppression fails to address the ways in which groups create intra-group oppression.

While it is true that dominant groups do indeed exploit and discipline subordinate groups, those same subordinate groups often recreate such power-discipline dynamics within themselves, leading to fractured group relationships and further disempowerment.

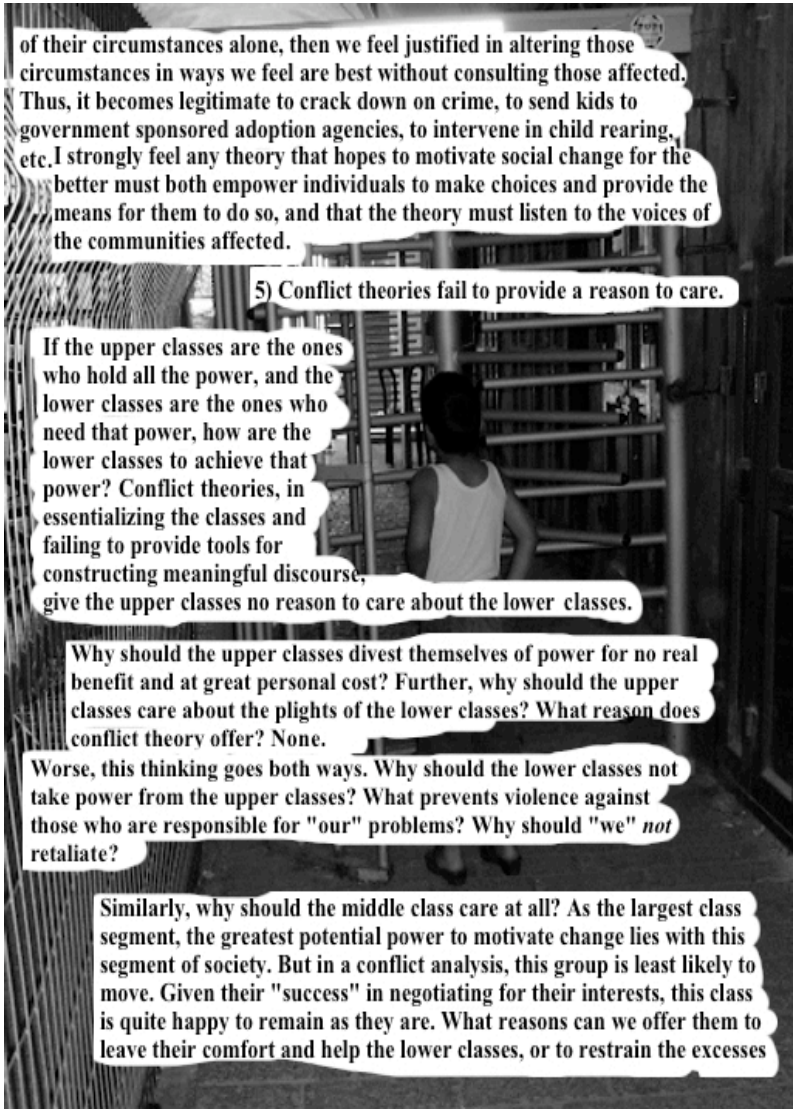
Take for example lower class drug trading and violence. Members of the lower classes who engage in organized drug trade often do so as a means of surviving, "getting out", or as a means of acquiring otherwise unavailable wealth and status. However, to succeed in the drug trade, a dealer often has to exploit community members. Kids are recruited to run the drugs, paid less than a Wal-Mart job would offer, and are often subject to violence. Further, drug dealers often have to compete for space, or belong to rival gang, resulting in "turf wars", and people get killed.

My point is that individuals of the lower class are fully capable of oppressing each other. In the above example, drug dealers exploit community members' labour, inflict gross physical harm on community members, and contribute to community fracturing. While we can locate considerable blame for creating the poverty and frustration that encourages these circumstances with dominant groups, they can not be held solely responsible for them. At some point, underclass members must be held responsible for exploiting the power they have within their communities for selfish ends.

4) Conflict-theories marginalize choice.

As with all social/structural theories, conflict-based perspectives look to the social universe to explain behavior. While I do not deny the power of the social universe to shape behavior, I do not believe that the social environment determines behavior.

In locating the motives and impetus for action in the social structure, conflict-theories fail to account for the diverse human beings who inhabit those social spaces. As an extension of this point, and in keeping with point 3, taking the view that actions are environmentally determined discourages individuals from taking personal responsibility. While I very much accept that our environments shape and direct our choices, I do not believe that social forces make those choices inevitable. Worse, I believe that holding a deterministic view legitimizes patronizing and paternalistic state behavior towards subordinate groups. If we believe that people are "that way" because



And, having noted that personal responsibility is marginalized in the conflict-analysis, whose responsibility is it to motivate for change? How, and on what basis, should organization occur?

The conflict analysis fails utterly to provide reasons for change, to motivate for that change, or to empower individuals or communities to seek and achieve positive change. As a theory, it largely consists of pointing out flaws and then hoping for the revolution, while taking no practical or contextual steps to get us there.

In sum, I feel that the conflict perspective has outlived its usefulness. The theories are altogether unhelpful. Instead of seeking solutions to problems in context, instead of providing us with meaningful and useful tools to motivate for change, instead of seeking to build understanding and dialogue between groups in an effort to dissolve the artificial boundaries that separate us, instead of looking to empower and equip communities and leaders to actively envision and achieve their goals, instead of working to build integrated communities based on real action, the conflict perspective has created a generation of academics who problematize ceaselessly while all the while doing nothing to solve the identified problems, a generation who bitches about capitalism over their Starbucks lattes, a generation that is jaded and bitter and utterly at a loss about what to do next, a generation of peoples who are divided and fractured and lacking common vision or a basis of unity.

I feel it is high time to move beyond the conflict perspective, to seek instead an academic vision and praxis grounded in a practical, realistic, and above all else passionately loving theory of change, a theory which recognizes the myriad identities and affiliations the individual can and does possess, a theory which empowers the personal voice and choice while affirming the place of the group, and a theory which seeks to identify and solve problems in context.

Anyone want to build it? <

"We believe so we speak"
2nd Corinthians 4:13

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Michael Friesen is taking time off from religious studies to travel throughout Europe. He is currently living in Ireland and will be living with the l'Arche community in Cork from February 2006 to February 2007. He has a blog at http://anarchocatholic.blogspot.com/

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Steven Woods is currently serving a death sentence at a Federal prison in Texas. He has a blog at www.anarchyinchains.com If you would like to write to Steven you can send mail to Steven Woods #999472 Polunsky Unit 3872 FM 350 S Livingston, TX 77351.

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A Creation Lament was given to Chris Rooney by one of the people he met while at Ammon Hennacy House in Los Angeles. It now occupies the frontispiece of his favourite prayer book.

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